

5 said internal spaces of said first and second sections being in gaseous communication with one another and sealed from an ambient space surrounding said outer casing at a first sealing level,

10 wherein one or more components are housed in said internal space of said first section and at least one of said components is a hermetically sealed unit formed at a second sealing level higher than said first sealing level.

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24. An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 23, wherein one of said first and second sections being an insertion unit whose outer casing is made at least partially of a polymeric material.

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25. An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 23, wherein said first sealing level seals said internal spaces of said first and second sections in a watertight manner relative to said ambient space surrounding said outer casing.

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26. An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 23, wherein even when a high-pressure steam permeates through said first sealing level and invades into said internal spaces of said sections, said high-pressure high-temperature steam will be hindered from invading into said hermetically sealing unit formed at said second sealing level.

Please amend Claims 2-22 as follows:

Claim 2, line 2, change "1" to -- 23 --.

3. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim [1] 23, wherein [the components of the joints at which] said hermetically sealed unit is composed of a plurality of airtight partition members, said airtight partition members are hermetically joined to one [using said airtight joining means are] another at one or more joints, said joints are made of a metal, ceramic, glass, or crystalline material.

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4. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 3, wherein said [airtight joining means] airtight partition members are joined to one another by a joining method based on welding such as fusion welding, pressure welding, brazing, soldering or a joining method using a molten glass.

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5 5. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim [1] 23, wherein said hermetically sealed unit [included in said contents and] formed at [the] said second sealing level is pressure-resistant to resist a negative pressure or pressurization to be attained or performed during autoclaving so as not to be destroyed, and wherein said hermetically sealed unit is sealed to such an extent that high-pressure high-temperature steam given off during autoclaving will not invade into [the] an interior [thereof] of said hermetically sealed unit.

6. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim [1] 23, wherein said hermetically sealed unit includes at least one of optical members and electronic parts or both [the] said optical members and said electronic parts as [internal members or] airtight partition members.

7. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 6, wherein said hermetically sealed unit is a lens unit having optical members [, which are] as said airtight partition members, said lens unit having a first and second end portions which are hermetically locked as optical windows [in both end portions thereof].

8. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 6, wherein said [contents] hermetically sealed unit includes an observing means having an optical member [, which is] as said airtight partition member, [as an optical window] said optical member is hermetically locked as an optical window therein, and said optical window is bared on [the] an outer surface [of] forming [said endoscope as] part of [the housing thereof] said outer casing of said endoscope.

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8. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim [7] 8,
wherein said observing means is an imaging unit having a solid-state imaging device as part of
an image transmitting means, said solid-state imaging device having an image input end, and an
objective unit having a first and second end portions which are hermetically locked as optical
windows, [hermetically locked in both end portions thereof is] said objective unit is located at
[the] said image input end of said solid-state imaging device.

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10. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim [8] 7,
wherein a metal coating having a lowermost layer formed as a low reflectance layer [as a
lowermost layer] and an uppermost layer formed as a joining layer [as an uppermost layer is]
formed on the outer circumferences of said optical ^{members} windows included in said lens unit [or in other
words, at joints at which said optical windows meet another member].

Claim 11, line 3, change "or consists" to -- consisting --.

Claim 12, line 2, change "the" to -- said --;

line 5, change "the range" to -- a range --;

change "the largest" to -- a largest --;

line 6, change "height" to -- roughness --;

change "the" to -- a --.

Claim 13, line 3, delete "close";

change "the" to -- said --.

Claim 14, line 4, delete "closely".

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15. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 9,
wherein said [contents include an] hermetically sealed unit is accommodated in said objective
unit, said objective unit [for forming] forms an object image, [and an imaging unit having a] said
object image is projected on said imaging surface of said solid-state imaging device, [on which

5 the formed object image is projected, wherein] said objective unit [accommodating said hermetically sealed unit formed at the second sealing level] is located in front of [the] said imaging surface of said solid-state imaging device, and [wherein] a member opposed to [the] a proximal outer surface of said solid-state imaging device is sealed at [the] said first sealing level.

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16. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 8,
[wherein when a] ^{comprising} ~~wherein said first section is~~ an insertion unit having a bendable part and a
distal rigid part, said bendable part [capable of] being [bent is located near the] in gaseous
communication with said distal [end] rigid part of said insertion unit, said hermetically sealed
5 unit [included in said contents] is accommodated in said insertion unit and positioned within [a]
said distal rigid part distal to said bendable part.

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17. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 7,
^{comprising} ~~wherein said~~ [contents include] ~~first section is~~ an observing means [or illuminating means]
having an optical fiber bundle as a light introducing path, said optical fiber bundle has an input
end and an output end, and said lens unit is located at [the] one of said input end [or] and output
5 end of said optical fiber bundle.

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18. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 17,
wherein one of said optical ^{members} ~~windows~~ included in said lens unit is [placed in close contact with
the] coupled to one of said input end [or] and output end of said optical fiber bundle.

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19. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 17,
wherein said lens unit located at [the] one of said input end and output end of said optical fiber
bundle [can be attached or detached freely] is detachable.

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20. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 6,
^{comprising} ~~wherein said~~ [contents] ~~sections include~~ an observing means [or illuminating means] having an
optical fiber bundle as a light introducing path, [optical fibers constituting the input end portion
or output end portion of] said optical fiber bundle has an input end portion and an output end

5 portion, said end portions of said optical fiber bundle are infiltrated with an airtightness retaining filler [in order] to make [the] said optical fibers airtight, and wherein [the] said end portions of said optical fiber bundle are hermetically fixed to said airtight partition members [that are integral parts] of said hermetically sealed unit.

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21. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim 6, wherein one of said airtight partition members of said hermetically sealed unit [has an] is a first optical member, [which is engaged] said first optical member engages with a frame member and has an optical path surface, [as an internal member or airtight partition member], and wherein
5 when [another] a second optical [members are closely] member is united with [the] said optical path surface of [the] said optical member, [the another] said second optical member [s are] is not engaged with said frame member.

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22. (Amended) An endoscope capable of being autoclaved according to claim [1] 23, ^{comprising} ~~wherein first section is an insertion unit having a bendable part and a distal rigid part, said second~~ ^{and} ~~section is an operation unit, said bendable part of said insertion unit is coupled to said operation~~
5 unit, [a] said bendable part of said insertion unit [capable of being bent] is [located near the] in gaseous communication with said distal [end] rigid part of said insertion unit, a first hermetically sealed unit is included in [a] said distal rigid part of said insertion unit distal to [the distal end of] said bendable part of said insertion unit, a second hermetically sealed unit is located [near] in said operation unit [beyond said bendable part], and said first and second hermetically sealed units are electrically linked by a cable.

REMARKS

Claims 2-26 are now presented for examination. Applicant has cancelled claim 1. Applicant has amended claims 2-22 to correct grammatical and idiomatic errors, and to place the claims in condition for allowance. Claims 23-26 have been added to assure Applicant of the